

PREVIEW
THE LAST OF US PART II

PREVIEW
MARVEL'S AVENGERS

REVIEW
RING FIT ADVENTURE

INTERVIEW
YOOKA-LAYLEE

Walmart Gamecenter

THE LATEST NEWS, REVIEWS, PREVIEWS, AND PLAYING TIPS INSIDE!

FREE
ISSUE

ISSUE
67





NINTENDO
SWITCH.



My Way to Play

SUPER SMASH BROS.[™] ULTIMATE



FORTNITE



Nintendo Switch



Nintendo Switch Lite

Nintendo Switch Lite plays all games that support handheld mode.
Games and systems sold separately.

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COVER STORY

**POKÉMON SWORD &
POKÉMON SHIELD**

28

Get ready to explore a new region and capture never-before-seen Pokémon on Switch.

STAR WARS
JEDI
FALLEN ORDER™
EA

AVAILABLE 11.15.19

Respawn
ENTERTAINMENT

LUCASFILM
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DOOM ETERNAL

03.20.20



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence



Bethesda

DOOM.COM

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Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language
Suggestive Themes



Bethesda

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RAGE 2 RISE OF THE GHOSTS

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AVAILABLE NOW

RAGE 2
TERRORMANIA
NEW DLC
COMING 11.14.19



WELCOME

FROM THE EDITORS



Expect the unexpected

As we approach a new, more powerful generation of video game hardware, it's easy to assume that the future of gaming will be a lot like the past. When the new consoles arrive, the biggest differences we'll notice are more pixels and polygons giving us slightly prettier graphics. But if you've followed the latest news closely, you know there's good reason to believe this time might be different.

That's not to say that next-gen won't make games easier on the eyes. Beyond just adding more horsepower, the new Xbox, codenamed Project Scarlett, and the PlayStation 5 are both introducing support for ray-tracing, a technology that allows real-time lighting that's truer-to-life. It's still early, but it may well be that ray-tracing will lead to a bigger visual jump than we're used to between generations.

What's really intriguing, though, is that the new hardware will bring upgrades with potential impacts in areas besides graphics. The PS5 and Scarlett both feature solid-state hard drives, which can cut load times down to a fraction of what we experience today. You won't just get into the game faster. You'll also be able to traverse more complex worlds more quickly and seamlessly, with less need to slow you down so the hardware can keep up.

The way we experience these games is also liable to change. You can read more about Sony's ambitious plans for the PS5 controller in the news section. And Microsoft is making a big push into game-streaming with Project

xCloud, which may one day allow you to play all your console games on your phone. Sony is embracing true cross-play, so players on different consoles can team up or go head-to-head online. And no doubt the trend of live-service games will continue, allowing more of the games we play to evolve over time. Gaming's future isn't just about beefing up the tech but rethinking how, why, and when we play.

In a way, this shift has been underway for some time, and it's even reflected in some of the games in this very issue. In the case of *Pokémon Sword and Shield*, our cover story, the change is obvious. As the first mainline game on Nintendo Switch, these titles highlight the growing overlap between the games we play at home and the games we play on the go.

The Last of Us Part II is already looking beyond graphics to other ways to immerse immersion, as it does with AI enemies that speak to one another by name. *Cyberpunk 2077* will make use of ray-tracing on PC and feels destined for a next-gen port. And *Marvel's Avengers* might well be the ultimate live-service game, adding in brand-new playable superheroes and adventures on an ongoing basis after launch.

No matter how games evolve, you can be sure you'll read about it here in *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L. Patterson

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Walmart
Gamecenter

DECEMBER 2019

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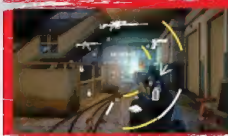
SEEK JUSTICE. NOVEMBER 22

SNIPER

GHOST WARRIOR

CONTRACTS

"...a sniper player's delight."
- Bleeding Cool



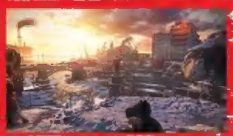
CHOOSE FROM AN ARSENAL OF
AUTHENTIC WEAPONS AND GADGETS



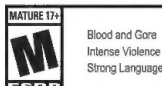
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ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING



25 CONTRACTS ACROSS 5 LARGE MAPS.
EACH ONE YOUR PERSONAL SANDBOX



Users Interact



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GAME ON

GAMING NEWS, NUMBERS & GOSSIP

BY GAMECENTER STAFF

Sony's next console is officially the PlayStation 5—here's what we know

Everyone knew that Sony's next console was going to be called PlayStation 5, but Sony Interactive Entertainment president and CEO Jim Ryan made it official when he revealed the name to *Wired*.

After letting that particular cat out of the bag, Ryan also (again, officially) announced that the PlayStation 5 will be available starting in the 2020 holiday season.

Prior to Ryan's announcements, the console's chief architect, Mark Cerny, had already unveiled some of what's going to be running under the PlayStation 5's hood. The good news for players who hate load times is that the console will come with a solid-state drive (SSD). Cerny told *Wired* back in April that the SSD in the PS5 is currently better than anything else on the market, meaning that load times could

be faster than those on even the highest-cost gaming PCs. Fast-traveling in *Marvel's Spider-Man* on a PS5 dev kit took less than one second, for reference.

Immersion, even outside of VR, also seems to be something that the PlayStation 5 is focusing on. One of its more impressive specs is that the GPU will support ray-tracing—the process that basically simulates how light travels to more realistically bring an environment to life. The AMD chip will also improve 3D sound, which will more fully immerse players in their games and make competitive multiplayer games like *Call of Duty* even more multisensory experiences.

Even the controller will contribute to this immersion. Instead of the standard rumble that's been included with PlayStation controllers ever since the original DualShock, the PS5 controller (which Sony isn't calling the DualShock 5... yet) will utilize haptic feedback. This means that traveling over different stuff in a game—rocks, grass, sand—will feel different through the controller. Using the trigger to pull back on a bow will give you the kind of tensile force on your finger that you'd expect.

We still have a year until the PlayStation 5 hits store shelves. In the meantime, though, the PlayStation 4 still has plenty of life ahead of it. With the recent release of *Death Stranding* and the upcoming releases of *The Last of Us Part II* and *Ghosts of Tsushima*, the Sony faithful will have plenty to celebrate throughout 2020—not just at the end.



BY THE NUMBERS

2 Number of years players can be banned from *Gears 5* if they abuse the ability to quit from multiplayer games

8.3 Update version that brings two new races to *World of Warcraft*, the Vulpera and the Mechagnomes

6+ million People who watched *Fortnite's* "The End" event live

0 Resources mined by YouTuber Hedgey before defeating *Minecraft's* Ender Dragon in a special challenge run

26 minutes New world record for beating *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* thanks to a recently discovered glitch, down from the previous record of just under four hours



HOW * DIGITAL DOWNLOAD WORKS

1.

Select

Select a digital download card from the latest participating game titles available on the Xbox One and PlayStation 4...

2.

Purchase

Purchase your digital download card at the register...



3.

Keep

Keep your receipt and locate the download code printed at the bottom...

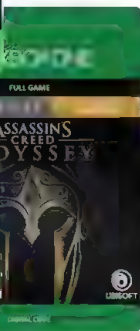


4.

Redeem

Redeem the code printed on your receipt in your game console to download (when available) and then Play First without returning to the store!

ENTER CODE



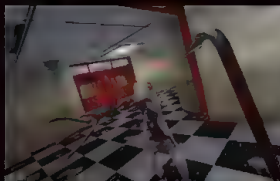
Two decades later, Half-Life has suddenly been updated

Once released, how long can we realistically expect a game to be supported? One year? Two? Five? It's a question that publishers, developers, and players have discussed over and over across the years.

What we wouldn't expect to see is a game getting an update 21 years later, and yet, that's exactly what just happened. To the surprise of pretty much everyone outside of the company, Valve recently released a new patch for *Half-Life*, the groundbreaking first-person shooter that first launched on CD way

back in 1998. Some of what the patch brought with it were standard inclusions, such as a fix for setting your monitor refresh rate, a remedy to a bug with weapon reloads after restarting a saved game, and an adjustment for some incorrect progress bars. Other changes, however, seem quite strange to get after so long, such as fixing the MP5's spread factor, which had had its multiplayer and single-player factors reversed.

Does this sudden patch for *Half-Life* mean that Valve has bigger plans for the game in the near future? Our answer to that would be the same answer we give to anything relating to the *Half-Life* franchise: a shrug of our shoulders. Even so, there's something comforting about knowing that games can still get patches after the time it would take for someone to be born, grow up, and head off to college.



Hitman developer reveals it's working on a new game—but what is it?

IO Interactive, the studio behind the *Hitman* series, officially revealed that it's working on a new game, and that Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment is once again signed on as publishing partner. There are hints, however, that it isn't *Hitman* 3.

There have already been some indications that IO is working on a third *Hitman* game in the series' current iteration, and it seems like a no-brainer, considering it's the studio's bread and butter. However, a job listing for a lead multiplayer network programmer was spotted as recently as October, indicating that the studio is working on new multiplayer content.



The latest *Hitman* titles have had some multiplayer content, so it's possible that the lead multiplayer network programmer is just here to maintain the status quo. However, according to the job listing, IO is "cooking a brand-new title and concept that will continue the immersive mastery we got you used to, except on a whole other level of player interaction."

That doesn't sound like *Hitman* to us, but something completely different. Still, IO fans should be excited. In the meantime, if you haven't already done so, pick up your copy of *Hitman 2* on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.



SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR CONTRACTS
CIGAMES / XBOX ONE, PS4

nov
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DRAGON BALL Z: KAKAROT
BANDAI NAMCO / XBOX ONE, PS4

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JOURNEY TO THE SAVAGE PLANET
505 GAMES / XBOX ONE, PS4

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ORI AND THE WILL OF THE WISPS
MICROSOFT / XBOX ONE

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DARKSIDERS GENESIS
THQ NORDIC / XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH

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IRON MAN VR
SONY / PSVR

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FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE
SQUARE ENIX / PS4

mar
3

ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW HORIZONS
NINTENDO / SWITCH

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DOOM ETERNAL
BETHESDA / XBOX ONE, PS4

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CYBERPUNK 2077
WARNER BROS. / XBOX ONE, PS4

apr
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MARVEL'S AVENGERS
SQUARE ENIX / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

may
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THE LAST OF US PART II
SONY / PS4

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Ubisoft announces several more animated shows based on game properties

Ubisoft has been aggressively expanding its output into the realm of TV, including a successful *Rabbids* cartoon and an upcoming show created by *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*'s Rob McElhenney. Now, the triple-A publisher revealed that it's developing several more animated programs based on existing properties representing all different age groups.

The most family-friendly shows in the works are a cartoon based on Ubisoft's mobile hit, *Hungry Shark*, as well as one based on the *Rayman* series. The limbless legend has starred in his own animated series before, *Rayman: The Animated Series*, which only aired four episodes in 1999 in France, Germany, and the Netherlands. It's about time that the Mario and Sonic rival got another chance to shine on the small screen.

Adult viewers will probably be a little more interested in *Captain Laserhawk: A Blood Dragon*



Vibe, the upcoming animated show based on *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon*. Retaining the game's cheesy, '80s sci-fi vibe, the most exciting thing about *Captain Laserhawk* is that Adi Shankar—the producer behind Netflix's top-notch *Castlevania* series—is helming the project. Considering *Castlevania* is arguably one of the best video game adaptations ever, *Blood Dragon* fans should be excited to see what Shankar can do with the expansion's bizarre world.

The most intriguing announcement, however, is the new "cybermystery" cartoon that Ubisoft is producing. The show will feature a high school student who solves mysteries using her hacker skills. While it was originally thought to be a *Watch Dogs* cartoon, in an October statement to *The Hollywood Reporter* Ubisoft explained that it's "inspired by the themes and ideas of the *Watch Dogs* brand but it is not set in the same universe or tied to it directly." *DedSec* might be a little too intense for a high schooler, after all, especially considering the authoritarian technofascism the hacktivist group will be facing in the upcoming sequel, *Watch Dogs: Legion*.

This might only be the beginning for Ubisoft's animated programming. If these shows are successful, expect to see an *Assassin's Creed* or *For Honor* anime. Heck, even *The Crew* could make for some fast and furious animated action.



Xbox introduces more ways to keep players safer

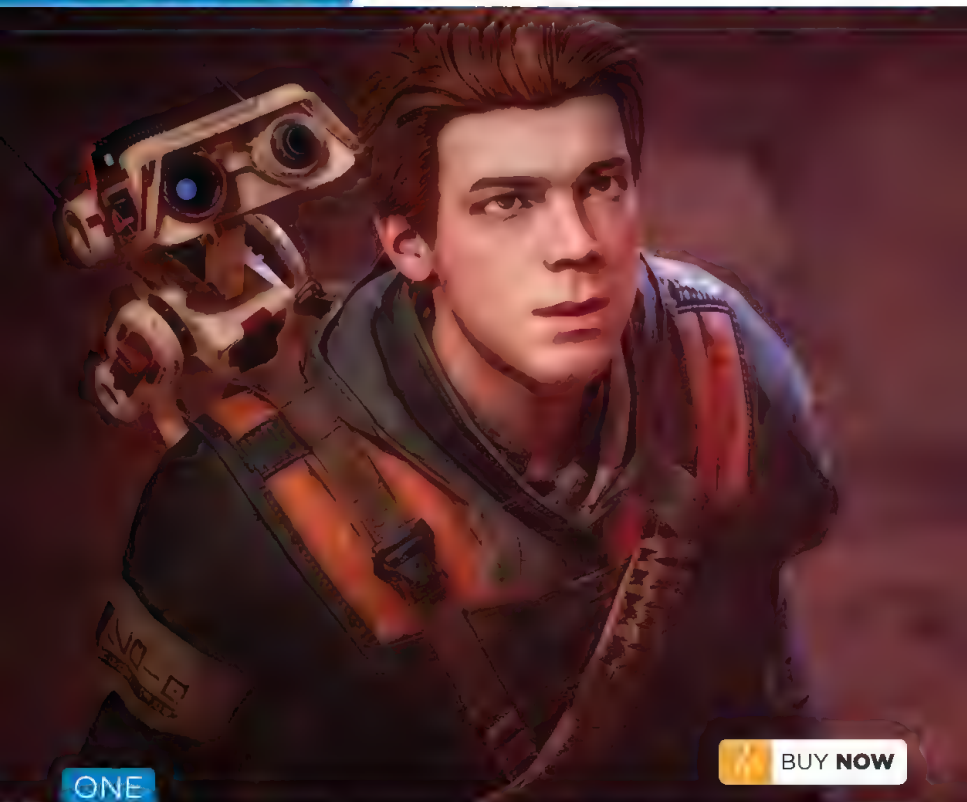
Through a recent set of updates, the team at Xbox has introduced some new options to help make gaming safer and more enjoyable for players of all ages on Xbox One.

First up is an additional set of family settings that allows parents to have more control over what their children see and interact with on the console. Parents can now set how much time their children can spend with specific apps or games, in addition to the total time spent using the Xbox One. This way parents can make decisions such as giving their children more time to watch videos through a streaming service, while simultaneously setting hard limits for how long a particular game can be played.

In addition, a new set of content filters are being added to Xbox One, starting with messages. Using these new tools, Xbox Live members can now set specific rules for what kinds of message content they receive from other players. These filters run checks on things such as the text of received messages, attached media in messages, included web links, and more. For each category, one of four filter levels can be selected: Friendly, Medium, Mature, or Unfiltered.

To learn more about Xbox One and all of its gaming and media options, check out Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.





STAR WARS JEDI: FALLEN ORDER

BLAIR BROWN, PRODUCER, RESPAWN ENTERTAINMENT

"*Jedi: Fallen Order* is a third-person action-adventure game where you take the role of a new character, Cal Kestis, as he becomes a Jedi. If you're interested in more of the *Star Wars* story after the events of *Episode III*, if you love the movies and you want to try something interactive, this is a really good jumping-off point—especially if you like the Jedi and lightsabers. You don't have to be a hardcore gamer to play *Fallen Order*. We have difficulty modes that accommodate those who want a challenge as well as people who may not be gamers at all. Even novices should be able to pick up a controller and still have a really great time and experience the story, the new worlds we've built, and characters like [Cal's droid companion] BD-1."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER RESPAWN ENTERTAINMENT
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 11.15 2019



OVER 800
AWARDS

GAME OF THE YEAR

IGN

GAME OF THE YEAR

THE GAME AWARDS

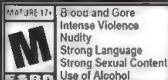
GAME OF THE YEAR

GAMESPOT

THE WITCHER WILD HUNT

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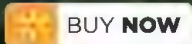


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WB GAMES LOGO, WB GAMES LOGO, WB SHIELD, TM & © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. (TM)





TWO



DEATH STRANDING

For his first game since leaving the *Metal Gear Solid* series behind, iconic game designer Hideo Kojima is going even deeper into the dystopian sci-fi genre. In *Death Stranding*, *The Walking Dead*'s Norman Reedus plays Sam Bridges, a courier living amidst the ruins of the United States who must travel through an open world, one fraught with dangers both physical and spectral, to deliver packages. He does so to reconnect people who have become isolated, in hopes of saving humanity from an even bigger catastrophe than the one that drove them apart and destroyed civilization. Joining Reedus in this epic and cinematic adventure—or, to be more specific, in the recording and motion capture studios—is an all-star cast that includes Mads Mikkelsen (*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*), Léa Seydoux (from the James Bond movie *Spectre*), and *The Bionic Woman* herself, Lindsay Wagner.

FACTFILE

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE
ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLATFORMS PS4
RELEASE DATE 11 08 2019



OVERWATCH

LEGENDARY EDITION

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Internet Connection Required



In-Game Purchases / Users Interact

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BLIZZARD
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THREE

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NEED FOR SPEED HEAT

YONI RABINOWITZ, LEAD DESIGNER, GHOST GAMES

"In *Need For Speed Heat*, a couple racers are trying to get themselves noticed on the streets of Palm City. But as they start to compete at higher levels, they gain the attention of a group of rogue cops who try to take them down at any cost. As for the gameplay, we're focused on making this a great street racing fantasy experience. So we've added cops who'll chase you, call in reinforcements, and use roadblocks and spike strips. You can also now choose to do sanctioned races during the day or go street racing at night with cops and traffic cars to avoid. But my favorite new thing are the engine customization options we've added. Not only can you now swap a different engine into your car, which brings the power and sound of that engine with it, but you can also tune the exhaust sound to be more throaty and aggressive."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER GHOST GAMES
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 11 08 2019



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Wireless gaming headset for PlayStation 4.
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PS4

COMPATIBLE



SHENMUE III

After over 17 years of waiting, fans of Sega and creator Yu Suzuki's groundbreaking *Shenmue* series will finally be getting some closure—or, at least, getting a little bit closer to it. As *Shenmue III* kicks off, we join up with protagonist Ryo Hazuki and his new travelling companion Shenhua Ling in Bailu Village, a small settlement nestled in the Guilin mountains of China. From there, the pair's journey will first take them to a riverside town filled with hotels, shops, and temples, then on to a location called Baisha which promises a dramatic siege battle among its attractions. When not eating or playing old-school arcade games, Ryo will test his martial arts skills in illegal street fights, have deep conversations with other characters (including some old friends), and test players' reactions with a variety of the franchise's signature Quick-Time Events.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER DEEP SILVER
DEVELOPER NEILO/YS NET
PLATFORMS PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 11 19 2019

**Save on These Great Games
this Holiday Season!**



CAPCOM



FIVE

MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES TOKYO 2020

MASON HYODO, SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER, SEGA OF AMERICA

"This is a party game through and through. There's more than 20 events in 3D, including skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing, along with 10 retro style 2D events that include Judo and 10m Platform Diving. It's funny seeing Bowser and Dr. Eggman, in all their classic pixelated glory, leaping off the diving board. There are also Dream events, such as Dream Racing on a hoverboard, which lean more towards the fantastic. And there's a new story mode. In it, Bowser and Dr. Eggman team up to trap Mario and Sonic in a game console called the Tokyo '64. But when everyone gets trapped, they must try and escape with the help of Luigi and Tails, who are at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. 1964 was the last time the Olympic Games were held in Tokyo, so it fits in well with it being held there once again next year."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SEGA

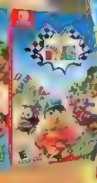
DEVELOPER EC2

PLATFORMS SWITCH

RELEASE DATE 11.05 2019

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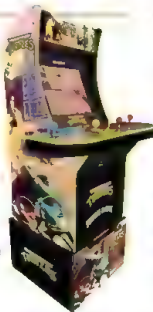
Disney
GAMES

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GAMES

HOT HARDWARE

ARCADE1UP TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES CABINET

Cowabunga! Play Arcade1Up's first four player game and join those epic turtles in a half-shell with **Konami's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Home Arcade Game!** Fight your way through the Foot-Clan, save April from Bebop and Rocksteady and defeat the all-time big badde, Shredder! Play on your own or with up-to four friends as Arcade1Up has brought back the iconic 4 player game control deck, so the only thing you're missing is the pizza for your party! **Konami's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Home Arcade Game** also includes 1991's **Turtles in Time** and a matching branded riser bringing the arcade machine to the playing height you remember for only **\$399**. Available now, only at Walmart.



RIG 700HS ARCTIC CAMO AND RIG 700HX URBAN CAMO WIRELESS GAMING HEADSETS

RIG 700 Series Camo headsets are the NEW, durable, ultra lightweight wireless gaming headsets from RIG at Walmart this Holiday season. With a game/chat balance dial and adjustable mic monitoring, choose the levels that work for you. High sensitivity 40mm drivers with bass tubes deliver crisp, powerful sound, so you hear the game the way the designers intended. Experience 3D Surround Sound: RIG 700HX URBAN CAMO also includes a Dolby Atmos for Headphones 2-year prepaid activation code for Xbox One. The RIG 700 series wireless headsets are the perfect gift for the gamers on your shopping list.



RIG 500 PRO HX AND RIG 500 PRO HS HIGH RESOLUTION GAMING HEADSETS

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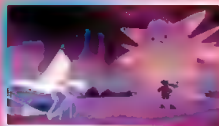
The Pokémon Company

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A NEW ERA OF POKÉMON IN JOLLY OLD GALAR

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON



FACT FILE

PUBLISHER NINTENDO
DEVELOPER GAME FREAK INC.
PLATFORMS SWITCH
RELEASE DATE 11.15.2019



A completely original, main-series Pokémon game crafted from the ground up to be played on a television.

In the 23 years since its introduction, the *Pokémon* series has taken players on adventures unlike anything else in gaming. From its humble beginnings in *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue* on the original Game Boy, to the *Pokémon Yellow* remakes that came to the Nintendo Switch last year as *Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu!* and *Pokémon: Let's Go, Eevee!*, *Pokémon* Trainers have caught innumerable *Pokémon*, fought in countless battles, and travelled all kinds of lands in the quest to catch 'em all.

Soon, however, those adventures will take trainers to a place they've never been before: a completely original, main-series *Pokémon* game crafted from the ground up to be played on a television.

Of course, given the versatility of the Nintendo Switch, *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* can still be portable games, no matter if that portability takes you to a friend's house,

Your New Bestiemon

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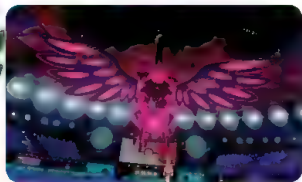
POLTEAGEIST



MORPEKO



GALARIAN PONYTA



on an airplane, or simply snuggled up in bed. The power of the Switch, however, means that *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* will be full-blown console experiences as well, coming to life like never before on bigger, high definition screens.

Television won't be the only new world that *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* will be travelling to, though. This time around your journey will take place in the Galar region, a never before seen part of the world that takes inspiration from an area of our world that's anything but new.

"The Galar region itself was inspired by the U.K., so players will see different cultural elements expressed in a variety of ways."

POKÉMON SWORD AND POKÉMON SHIELD DIRECTOR
SHIGERU OHMORI

"The Galar region itself was inspired by the U.K., so players will see different cultural elements expressed in a variety of ways," said *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* director Shigeru Ohmori. "For example, some of the architecture is based on designs from the Industrial Revolution, which began in the U.K. Pokémon battles in the Galar region are a popular sport, similar to soccer in the U.K., with games taking place in big stadiums and many famous players having groups of fans."

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I Want to Look the Very Best

Ohmori explained to us that in the Galar region, you'll often see humans and Pokémon working together to develop the various industries of the region. Of course, it wouldn't be a *Pokémon* game if everything was completely harmonious with the world's Pokémon. Step outside those sprawling cities and you'll be able to take your chances in the Wild Area.

"The Galar region also has a unique location called the Wild Area, which is a wide-open space that offers a lot of freedom for players to explore," Ohmori continued.

A vast expanse of untamed wilderness, the Wild Area is where Trainers will find the

greatest variety of Pokémon. Encounters there can either be random or triggered by Pokémon that are visibly walking around, and which Pokémon you'll run into at any one time will depend on factors such as weather or location. You'll definitely want to try searching under different conditions, as *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* offer a plethora of new Pokémon for Trainers everywhere to collect (see "Your New Bestiemon" sidebar). Even better, giving some of your lesser-used Pokémon a shot will be easier this time around, as experience gained from battle

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A vast expanse of untamed wilderness, the Wild Area is where Trainers will find the greatest variety of Pokémon.



PLANTS vs. ZOMBIES

BATTLE FOR NEIGHBORVILLE

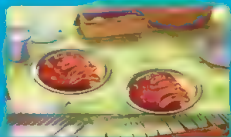
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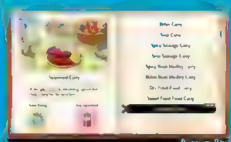
Comic Mischief
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Curry with a Side of Pokémon



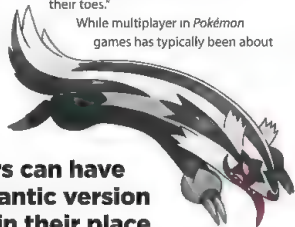
is automatically shared among your entire roster by default.

Towering over smaller tweaks like that is one of the biggest changes—both figuratively and literally—to *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield*'s combat: Dynamax. With Dynamax, Trainers can have Pokémon project a gigantic version of themselves to fight in their place, one which boosts things like their strength, skills, and stats.

"Dynamax is a new power-up feature that's different than those seen in other *Pokémon* games," said Ohmori. "In the main story, Dynamax can only be used in specific locations such as Gyms and Dens [in the Wild Area], but

Trainers can also use it in multiplayer battles. What's unique about Dynamax is that any Pokémon can use it, and it does not require a specific item to be held. However, Dynamax can only be used once per battle, so Trainers will need to think strategically about when to use it in order to keep their opponent on their toes."

While multiplayer in *Pokémon* games has typically been about

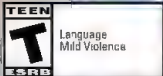


With Dynamax, Trainers can have Pokémon project a gigantic version of themselves to fight in their place.

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trying to best another human opponent, *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* will evolve those expectations by introducing a totally new concept to the series: co-op. Now, up to four players will be able to participate in Max Raid Battles, special encounters in which Trainers must fight together as a team to overcome incredibly challenging Pokémon.

"This idea was inspired by the Dynamax feature, which we came up with first," Ohmori explained. "Since Dynamax makes Pokémon larger and more powerful, we thought it would be fun for players to come together and fight against these more powerful 'bosses' as a team. It's the first time players can truly cooperate in a Pokémon battle experience. Up to now, many players have enjoyed competitive battling, but we hope this is a fun new addition that allows players to connect with friends nearby and with other Trainers around the world."

Even with larger-than-life Dynamaxed Pokémon, four-player team battles, and the ability to play on screens either big or small,

Pokémon Sword and *Pokémon Shield* bring with them a new generation of Pokémon that remains rooted in the core concepts of the franchise. After 23 years of evolution, this may be the biggest and most advanced chapter of the series yet. 

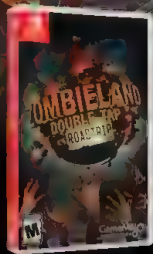


After 23 years of evolution, this may be the biggest and most advanced chapter of the series yet.



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PREVIEW

PRE-ORDER

THE LAST OF US PART II

AFTER THE FALL

BY JOSH HARMON

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER NAUGHTY DOG
PLATFORMS PS4
RELEASE DATE 05 29 2020

DOG-EAT-YOU WORLD

One of the most meaningful additions to *The Last of Us Part II*'s combat encounters isn't infected or human. When Ellie is on the streets of Seattle, the patrols she confronts will sometimes be accompanied by trained canine units. The tactical pooches are outfitted with adorable little vests, which makes it all the more unfortunate that they're not there to lick your face and play fetch.

Instead, human enemies will use the dogs to flush you out when you're hiding out of sight—and they'll go into full-on attack mode once they spot you. Dogs can smell a scent trail of where you've been walking recently, meaning that it's no longer safe to hide out in cover and assume patrols will walk right by. You'll need to distract the dog by throwing an object, or find a less PETA-friendly way to resolve the situation. If you don't want to lose the element of surprise.

Naughty Dog is keeping many details of the story under wraps for now, but we do know that the game will follow Ellie five years after the conclusion of the last game.

How do you follow up a game like *The Last of Us*, Naughty Dog's masterful 2014 foray into survival horror? For most sequels, the answer is to go bigger: more weapons, crazier fights, an even more sinister villain. But what made *The Last of Us* great, in part, was its restraint. Its story of an older man, Joel, and a teenage girl, Ellie, traveling across a country brought to collapse by a zombie-spawning fungal infection, wasn't about saving the world. It didn't have some big bad at the end. Combat wasn't about the wealth of weapons at your disposal, but the absence

of ammo, such that even small threats were serious and every shot had to count.

The Last of Us Part II, then, can't rely on the standard approach. To make a great game into a great series, it'll need to find a way to make those same elements—storytelling, character, and tension—feel just as impactful the second time around, and that's no easy task.

Naughty Dog is keeping many details of the story under wraps for now, but we do know that the game will follow Ellie five years after the conclusion of the last game. Now 19, she's found a measure of stability

in a settlement in Jackson, Wyoming, where the population lives mostly protected from the threat of the infected. After a (still secret) tragedy upends this peace, Ellie sets out on a cross-country journey for revenge that eventually takes her to the Pacific Northwest. As far as setups go, it's a bit more cliché than the first game, but we suspect there's a reason the studio is being so cagey about specifics, and head writer Neil Druckmann has earned a bit of trust after penning the first game and *Uncharted 4*.

The most intense combat we've played dwarfs anything in the first game in terms of scope.

We know a bit more about *The Last of Us Part II* on the gameplay front. Many of the basics remain the same, with lots of downtime between fights for exploration, character moments, and scavenging. Puzzle-solving that's refreshingly mundane, like rolling a dumpster against a wall to reach a rooftop. Combat against human foes and the infected that goes much smoother if you can rely on stealth and use traps.

But the most intense combat we've played dwarfs anything in the first game in terms of scope, and the enemy AI feels far smarter this time around. Humans will even audibly strategize together and call out to one another by name. There are new enemy types that force



you to change your tactics, too. For instance, a new infected type called the Shambler spits out an acidic cloud when you get too close and explodes once you manage to finish it off, making it crucial to keep your distance and stay on the move. What's more, every moment impresses graphically thanks to lush visuals and a new animation system that makes all of Ellie's actions appear fluid and natural. From a gameplay and technical standpoint, Naughty Dog looks poised to deliver another masterclass.

Whether *The Last of Us Part II* can match the first game's narrative accomplishments remains to be seen, but it's already clear that everything around the story is shaping up nicely enough that fans should be hopeful. And in a world as bleak as Ellie's, hope counts for a lot. ©

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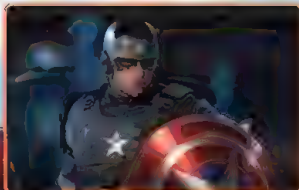
MARVEL'S AVENGERS

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

BY JOSH HARMON

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS, EIDOS-MONTREAL
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 05.15.2020



I CAN DO THIS ALL DAY

Of course, for Marvel fans, one of the most exciting things we've learned about *Marvel's Avengers* is that the game will continue to expand in the months after launch. That's hardly a shocker in this day and age, but what's surprising is that Square Enix doesn't intend to simply throw out more loot and infinitely repeatable missions devoid of storytelling context.

Instead, the company will introduce new playable heroes with new storylines that give their missions a role in the broader story of this world. In other words, *Marvel's Avengers*, like the MCU, will offer a narrative that unfolds over the course of years, not just the dozen-plus hours it'll take to beat the campaign at launch.

So who can we expect to join the fight? We've already seen a trailer indicating that Ant-Man—the Hank Pym version—will be introduced to the game in post-launch content, and while we don't have outright confirmation he'll be playable, he seems like a safe bet. Beyond that, the opportunities seem nearly endless.

From what we've seen so far, *Marvel's Avengers* looks more like six different action games rolled into one than a single title.

Many past games have struggled to truly capture the feeling of being a Marvel superhero. Despite high points—*Marvel's Spider-Man* on PS4 being the obvious example—there have been far more lows, including a slew of mediocre last-gen titles based on Thor, Captain America, and Iron Man. In light of that, making a game where you play not just as one hero, but as all of the Avengers superteam, feels like the sort of ambition that borders on insanity.

Well, Crystal Dynamics and Eidos-Montréal are doing just that. *Marvel's Avengers*, due out next year, offers a big roster of characters—Ms. Marvel, Captain America, Black Widow, Hulk, Iron Man, and Thor—but what's more impressive is that each character will offer gameplay true to what fans would expect. As Thor, you can chuck out your hammer to smack enemies, and then call it back to you, a little like Kratos' ax in last year's *God of War*. As Iron Man, you can hover above the action, firing out a bar-

rage of missiles or using your repulsor beam. And Hulk? Well, Hulk smash. Obviously.

From what we've seen so far, *Marvel's Avengers* looks more like six different action games rolled into one than a single title. While there will doubtless be some common threads in how all the characters control in battle and traversal, the variety on display is remarkable.

Equally ambitious is the way in which the game divides up the action. On one side, players will be able to experience a single-

PREVIEW

player story campaign that switches between multiple perspectives, allowing for battles that play out like the most memorable team-ups from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The central figure in this story will be Kamala Khan, otherwise known as Ms. Marvel, who sets out to reunite the Avengers years after a catastrophic event tarnishes their reputation—and seemingly leaves Captain America dead. This adventure will place our heroes in opposition to a number of familiar superfoes, all seemingly operating in conjunction with the villainous group known as A.I.M. So far we've seen Taskmaster and Abomination, but more are undoubtedly lurking in the shadows.

At points throughout this main story you'll also be able to take on more open-ended missions with up to three friends.

At points throughout this main story—and after you've completed it—you'll also be able to take on more open-ended missions with up to three friends. In these missions you'll be able to play as whichever hero you like, and the action is designed to be repeatable over and over again. To keep you coming back for more, you'll be able to earn special gear for your heroes, changing up their loadouts with different bonuses.

In this respect, *Marvel's Avengers* is like a cross between a traditional action romp and a cooperative, loot-based game in the vein of *Destiny 2*. That may not seem like the easiest merger to pull off, but if there's one lesson we've learned from the Avengers, it's the benefit of a good team-up. ©



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PRE-ORDER

CYBERPUNK 2077

HERE'S YOUR FUTURE

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER CD PROJEKT
DEVELOPER CD PROJEKT RED
PLATFORMS BOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 04.16.2020


The lead-up to CD Projekt Red's *Cyberpunk 2077* has been one of the strangest in gaming history. The Polish studio first announced the game over half a decade ago, before it even released *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*—the game that turned CDPR into one of the biggest studios in the world seemingly overnight. Since then, *Cyberpunk 2077* weathered sweeping design changes, actual cyber-theft, and no shortage of controversy to become one of the most anticipated games of all time. We're talking on the level of a new *Rockstar* or *Zelda* game.

There seems to be something in the air around the game's release. 2020 is the year that Mike Pondsmith's 1990 *Cyberpunk* tabletop RPG took place. Funny enough,

three decades later, 2020 is also the year that *Cyberpunk 2077* is launching. The future is now—and thankfully it isn't as completely dire as Pondsmith predicted, but there's a kernel of truth in all the radioactivity and corporate power. Pondsmith actually worked pretty closely with CD Projekt Red to make sure that 2077's version of Night City makes sense within the series' overarching universe.

You don't have to have sat around a table reading off charts to play *Cyberpunk 2077*. This is a wholly original storyline starring a mercenary named V who lives and works in Night City, where everyone is cybernetically enhanced, economic disparity has turned several burroughs into warzones, and corporations own everything. One day V accepts a job





Cyberpunk 2077
weathered sweeping
design changes,
actual cyber-theft,
and no shortage
of controversy to
become one of the
most anticipated
games of all time.

IS THERE MULTIPLAYER?

You just had to ask about multiplayer, didn't you? CD Projekt Red is creating one of the most immersive and detailed game worlds ever with a twisting, turning story and deep character progression and customization, and all you can think of is multiplayer.

Well, from what we know, CD Projekt Red has stated that multiplayer will come to the game at some point after its launch—think months, maybe even years down the line. Previous rumors indicated that there would be different gathering hubs where players could meet up and set out on missions together, but that doesn't seem to be the case anymore, at least for now.

We also know that CD Projekt Red is committed to keeping the game alive long after its release by adding side missions and more story content, similar to what it did with *The Witcher 3*. That should keep you busy until multiplayer launches.



that sends them (players create V, unlike *The Witcher's* Geralt) on the hunt for an implant that's said to somehow give the owner immortality. Somewhere along the way, V starts seeing visions of Johnny Silverhand, a legendary rockerboy played by Keanu Reeves who wants to start a revolution in Night City. Yes, the story sounds absolutely off the walls, somehow managing to create high stakes in a world that's not as epic or as fantastical as, say, *The Witcher's* Redania.

That's not to say that Night City isn't as impressive as *The Witcher 3's* open world. In fact, from what we've seen so far, Night City is just as expansive and immersive, just in different ways. We know that the game world will consist of six or seven distinct regions that players can explore—ranging from pristine corporate-owned city blocks and luxury suburbs to gang-run ghettos and industrial parks. One way that

Night City really stands out is in its verticality, as players can enter some buildings and see the city from a new perspective. One of the reasons that CD Projekt Red decided to make the game entirely first person is because it's the best way to immerse players in Night City's detail-rich worlds.

When it comes to the "role playing" aspects of this action RPG, players won't pick a class for V. Rather, they'll build their own class out of skills that focus on different areas, such as hacking, strength, weapon handling, and even coolness. You can punch and blast your way through different enemy encounters, or you can hack around the problem and find less physically taxing ways to solve problems.

The fantasy of *Cyberpunk 2077* is running around a fully immersive world as a self-sufficient mercenary. The future is almost here and it's looking intense.



RING FIT ADVENTURE

89

100

FIT FOR ADVENTURE

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

Nintendo has a long and storied history of combining exercise with video games, harnessing the excitement of gaming to entice reluctant potatoes off their couches. While the company's previous fitness efforts tended to center on what were ultimately straightforward exercise routines, *Ring Fit Adventure* takes a much different path by, well, giving you a path to follow.

That path weaves its way through a world reminiscent of more traditional RPGs and adventure games, with wild areas to explore,

towns to visit, NPCs to save, and bosses to defeat. Choose a destination from one of a variety of maps, and then prepare to sweat: In *Ring Fit Adventure* you actually have to jog in place to get your avatar moving, which the game tracks by having you strap one of the Switch's two Joy-Con controllers to your leg.


The other one attaches to the Ring-Con, a special device that resembles a Pilates ring. While running through stages, squeezing the Ring-Con sends out a blast of air to destroy obstacles, stretching it sucks in nearby coins,

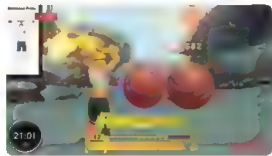
and pointing it downward jumps over pits. A variety of other novel inputs await discovery, too. Along the way, enemies will pull you into battle, where you'll need to use targeted exercises called Fit Skills to attack or defend until you achieve victory. For example, one Fit Skill had us squeeze the Ring-Con while holding it above our heads to work on our upper arms, while another had us rotate the Ring-Con side to side for a standing twist.

The end result is that *Ring Fit Adventure* is one of the most engrossing exercise games ever made. Integrating the various routines into what feels like a legitimately fleshed-out adventure made it feel like we were playing a video game that wanted us to be healthier, versus an exercise program trying to disguise itself as a game. The Ring-Con turned out to be much more versatile than we expected, serving as a satisfying gateway to a wide variety of in-game actions.

If there's one sore spot it's that sometimes *Ring Fit Adventure*'s two sides clash a bit, such as when a certain Fit Skill might be too hard for a player to perform but is also just ignore due to its high damage rating. Still, that's a small hitch in a game that's engaging enough to have us actively wanting to exercise every day.

When you'd like more exercise and less game, *Ring Fit Adventure* also lets you create your own custom fitness lists with exercises or minigames you want to focus on, or jump into Quick Play's numerous challenges that target specific muscle groups. Finally, and most surprising, the game features a Multitask Mode, which lets you use the Ring-Con to do presses and pulls while the Nintendo Switch is powered down to later add credit to your exercise goals.

While *Ring Fit Adventure* might initially look like one of the weirdest movement-based game concepts Nintendo has ever come up with, the result is an experience that is both fun for the brain and a good workout for the body. Whether you're trying to introduce exercise to your daily life or looking for more workout options, *Ring Fit Adventure* will keep you sweaty but satisfied. 



A GAME BY KOJI IGARASHI

Bloodstained

— RITUAL OF THE NIGHT —



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1 on 1
with

PARTING SHOTS

Harry Robinson

DESIGN DIRECTOR, YOOKA-LAYLEE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE LAIR



"A 3D game is like exploring a theme park, whereas a 2D game is like being on a rollercoaster."

VITAL SIGNS

OCCUPATION
DESIGN DIRECTOR, PLAYTONIC GAMES

GAME HIGHLIGHTS
KINECT SPORTS RIVALS,
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WGC: One of the biggest changes for *Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair* over the original *Yooka-Laylee* is the switch from 3D-focused platforming to 2D platforming. What does this shift bring to gameplay?

Harry Robinson: A 3D game is like exploring a theme park, whereas a 2D game is like being on a rollercoaster, keeping you in the action all the time. In *Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair*, players can be as brave or cautious as they like, and as they get better, they can impress their friends and family with their growing skills and hoard of shiny collectibles. We provide a more relaxing, puzzle-based world to explore in between platforming levels too, retaining some of the "theme-park" style exploration which has enabled us to come up with a very unique structure [that's] never been seen before—it's like having two games in one.

WGC: That puzzle-based overworld definitely is one of the game's more interesting aspects. Why did you include it in addition to the standard 2D levels?

HR: We felt there was a huge amount of potential for the "traditional map screen" to be a far more significant part of the game, so we made it into an actual world to explore that's full of gameplay, with characters to meet, locations to explore, puzzles to solve, and secrets to find. It's a space that has tons of Playtonic charm and humor, and that provides a really nice change of pace from the more intense 2D levels. What you do on the overworld can open up all new possibilities and customization for the gameplay in 2D sections, [so] the two experiences combine really well—no two playthroughs need be the same, so it gives the game lots of replayability!

WGC: Something else that's unique about *Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair* is that you can attempt its titular Impossible Lair at any time if you're feeling brave enough

While mascot-focused platformers aren't as prolific as they once were, developers like Playtonic Games are helping to keep them alive for fans new and old. The studio's first game, *Yooka-Laylee*, harkened back to the glory days of titles like *Banjo-Kazooie* on the N64. Playtonic's latest, *Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair*, merges classic 2D platforming with new twists. To learn more, we spoke to design director Harry Robinson.

to try to beat the end boss. Can you tell us more about the idea?

HR: Although it's true that players can take on what is effectively the last level of the game straight away, we really don't expect many people to get very far—it's more of a long-term challenge once you've played the game through and a cool goal to achieve in due course! As players complete the 2D levels, they free Beettalion guards who will go into the Impossible Lair with you and take a hit on [your] behalf. The more levels you complete, the more bees you free, the more hits you can take and the more possible the Impossible Lair becomes.

WGC: *Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair* features a wide assortment of tonics that can offer a variety of new gameplay options. What are some of the team's favorite tonics?

HR: There are 62 Tonic in the game and they are all very different, so it's hard to pick just one favorite! One we like enables players to press a button and slow down the game for a short period of time—it really helps you to get out of sticky situations. Another team favorite is one that changes the game to look like it's being played on a retro games console. I think the one that made us laugh the most makes Yooka's head about four times bigger than normal! There are literally millions of possible combinations so players can customize the experience in looks, sound, and difficulty in a way that suits them.

WGC: If you were the star of a new mascot platform, what kind of animal would you be, and what would some of your trademark abilities be?

HR: I'd have to be a badger and my super skill would be to get some much-needed sleep. I have a two-year-old daughter and sleep is something that is but a distant memory these days! ☺

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